

20 REASONS FOR THE PRE-TRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

By Jack W. Langford

(Who at one time sincerely believed in
The Post-Tribulational Rapture of the Church
and knew its arguments well.)

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DEFINING THE RAPTURE

First of all, it would be appropriate to define what the Rapture of the Church is and explain what makes it unique. The Rapture of the Church of Jesus Christ is the sudden translation of both the resurrected dead and the living Church saints out of this world. This is to take place at the coming of the Lord for the Church at the close of this particular Age or Dispensation. There are two main passages given by the Apostle Paul that explain this to us. The first is from Paul's first inspired letter to the new Christians of Thessalonica—I Thess. 4:13-18. In this passage it is revealed that both the resurrected dead saints and those saints alive on earth at the time of Christ's coming for the Church will suddenly be **“caught up together...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”** In the very next chapter Paul indicates that this glorious event will happen in close proximity to “the Day of the Lord” (I Thess. 5). The second passage is from Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church, I Cor. 15:51-57. Herein we are told that this catching up of the Church was a “Mystery,” which means it was not known in past Ages (Col. 1:26,27), and that it involved a change in our bodies from “mortality to immortality, “ and that it will be done very suddenly as in “the blinking of an eye.”

The word **“rapture”** is taken from the older, much used, Latin translation of the Bible, from the Latin verb *“rpto”* of I Thess. 4:17—“to be caught up or raptured.” This “catching away” of the Church is commonly called “The Rapture of the Church.” The Greek word *“harpazo”* simply means “to snatch or catch away.” It is used elsewhere in Scripture when the evangelist Philip was suddenly, miraculously transported from one spot in Palestine to another place many miles away (Acts 8:39). It is also used of Paul being suddenly transported into the “third heaven” (II Cor. 12:2,4). In the book of Revelation it is used of Christ (“The Man Child”) being caught away “into heaven” (Rev. 12:5). In the case of the Rapture of the Church, it means the total members of the “Body of Christ,” both dead and living, will be suddenly transported into the air to meet Christ at His coming and then, as we shall see, to be taken by Him into heaven.

There are many other references in Paul's letters which talk about this stupendous event as the abiding and ever present Hope of the Church of Jesus Christ. This has earnestly been anticipated by every generation of true Christians. Since this is a clear prophecy of the future blessing for the Church it has naturally been asked, “When will it happen? Will it happen after the great prophesied worldwide calamities of the Last Days—The Great Tribulation—or will it happen before in its own distinct time??” The

purpose of this Bible study is to show that the Rapture of the Church will happen before the prophesied Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord's wrath. In other words, the simple order in which it is first revealed in I Thessalonians—first, the Rapture (Chap.4), and then “the Day of the Lord” (Chap.5)—is the actual order in which these two events will occur.

DISPENSATIONAL DISTINCTIONS

To understand this event one must first understand that in the Bible there are revealed different time periods called “Ages” or “Dispensations” during which there are different economies in God's dealing with mankind. The Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church is the normal position or outgrowth of Dispensational Bible teaching. For further information about this, please ask for the chart and explanation of the Dispensations called “The Rightly Dividing Chart.” All Bible students must believe in the different “Ages” or “Dispensations” that the Bible speaks about; this is fundamental. True enough, many teachers try to twist these Ages around to suit their theories but, nevertheless, you need to be familiar with them in order to understand this present Age in which we live. It is also fundamental, when one reads the Bible on this subject, to recognize the distinctive ministry of the Apostle Paul for this present Church Age. The distinctive revelations about the Church Age (Eph. 3:1-7) are given through the Apostle Paul—who is also noted as “the apostle to the Gentiles,” in contrast to the other twelve apostles who were distinctly called “to the circumcision” or Israel (see Galatians 2).

With these preliminary thoughts we will begin our trek through the various proofs that the Church of Jesus Christ will be “raptured” out of this earth prior to the prophesied time of Great Tribulation coming upon mankind. Please check up and read all the Scriptures that will be given in order to prove for yourself, as a “noble Berean” (Acts 17:11), whether these things are so. I have changed the order of these “Reasons,” from when I first gave them in 1982, in order to give a better sequential perspective.

REASON NO. I

The Rapture is Missing from Resurrection Prophecies of the Old Testament

The Hebrew Scriptures spelled out very clearly that there was to be a resurrection from the dead of all saints of past ages. Some of the Greek Scriptures added to this line of prophecy about the resurrection of the Old Testament saints. The final book of Revelation even adds that the saints who die during the Great Tribulation will be raised at the very same time. These prophecies tell plainly when this particular resurrection will occur.

1. Job 19:25-27 When the Redeemer stands upon the earth in the latter days.
2. Isa. 25:6-9 When the Messiah restores all things.
3. Isa. 26:19-21 At the conclusion of Messiah's indignation.
4. Hosea 13:9-14 When the Great King will save Israel.

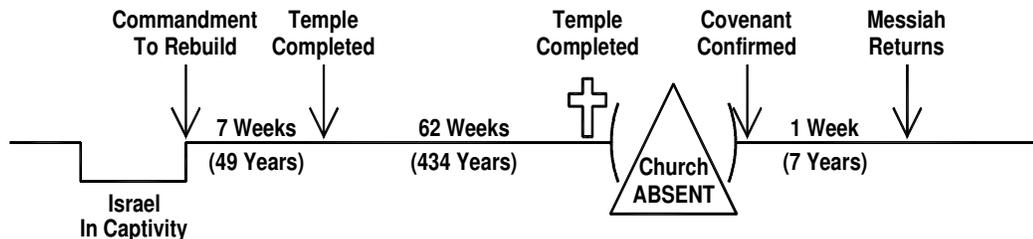
5. Dan. 12:1-3 At the time of the “end” of the tribulation period.
6. Dan. 12:13 At the “end” of the prophesied days of Israel’s trouble.
7. John 11:24 At the “last day”.
9. Luke 14:14 At the resurrection of the Just.
8. Acts 24:15 Resurrection of the Just.
10. Rev. 20:4-6 After Great Tribulation, at the beginning of the Millennium.

Please read all these passages carefully. There is one thing common to all these passages and that is the fact that the Rapture of the Church of Jesus Christ is MISSING! It is simply not to be found! That there is the resurrection of all the Old Testament saints to glorified life on earth is factual. That the Tribulation saints join this resurrection from the dead is factual. That this resurrection occurs at the very end of the Great Tribulation at the second coming of the Jewish Messiah to rule and reign on earth is factual. That these passages talk about the unique translation of Church saints, both those who are resurrected from the dead and living saints, into the air to meet Christ and return with Him to heaven IS NOT FACTUAL—IS NOT GIVEN—IS MISSING from all these passages. The only conclusion is that the Rapture is distinct and different. Likewise, since it is MISSING—NOT THERE—it could only have happened at an earlier date!

REASON NO. II

The Church is not in the Prophesied 70 weeks of Daniel

In the 9th chapter of Daniel, verses 20-27, God reveals the future time clock for the nation of Israel, from Daniel’s time until the Messiah’s death and second coming. These 70 weeks of years equal 490 years of history for Israel. In addition, in several places the book of Daniel speaks extensively about this future final 70th week. See the chart below. The simple fact, that anyone can observe, is that the Church which is Christ’s Body is nowhere found in this time period. It is most certainly NOT in the first 69 weeks of years because it was not created until after the death of Christ. NOR is it found anywhere in the book of Daniel so as to be placed in this final 70th week. The Church is parenthetical in nature to these events. It is MISSING!



REASON NO. III

The Rapture of the Church is not found in MATTHEW 3, 13, 24 or 25.

These are the great prophetic passages of Matthew that speak of the Messiah's coming to reign in the future Kingdom on earth in the last days. Each passage clearly spells out what will happen to the saints who are alive during that immediate time period. Once again, in all these passages you will NOT find the Rapture of the Church; it is simply not there! Once again, it is MISSING!

1. Matt. 3:10-12 John the Baptist is here predicting the coming judgment by the Messiah. The saints are represented by the "good fruit" trees that are left standing, whereas the dead trees are thrown into the fire (verse 10). The same is represented in verse 12, by the gathering of the wheat (saints) into the barns (i.e., the Kingdom). The unsaved (chaff) are destroyed as with fire. See also Malachi 4:1, 2. *There is No Rapture!*
2. Matt. 13: The Parable of the wheat and tares (24-30, 36-43) teaches a similar truth. The righteous grow up during the Tribulation period ministry. The tares also grow up, but at the harvest they are first gathered and burned in the fire. Whereas the righteous are gathered into the Kingdom on earth. *There is no Rapture!*
3. Matt.24: Prophecy of the Great Tribulation and second coming of Christ. Note once again that the wicked are taken in judgment whereas the righteous are left (36-41). Israel, God's elect is regathered (v.31) in fulfillment of Deut. 30:1-6. Once again, *There is no Rapture!*
4. Matt.25: This speaks of the judgment of the nations at the second coming of Messiah (31-46). The sheep and goats are representative of two classes of people—goats the unsaved, sheep the saved. The sheep are those who served God during the Tribulation period. Now they are rewarded entrance into the Kingdom. The goats are cast out. Again, *There is no Rapture!*

None of the "saints" in any episodes of Matthew's prophetic accounts are said to be "glorified" in any way, nor are they "caught up" in the air to meet Christ. They are all simply gathered into the Kingdom of the Messiah at the time of His return. All these accounts are complete in and of themselves. There are saved and unsaved. And then, there are the saved going into the Messianic Kingdom. Since the Church is not found in these passages, nor is the Rapture found in any of these passages, the Rapture of the Church must have taken place sometime before these events take place. Very plainly, the Rapture of the Church does not take place at the end of the Great tribulation period at the second coming of the Messiah to reign in His Kingdom on earth.

REASON NO. IV

The Church was a “Mystery,” not revealed before.

The Apostle Paul specifically says that the Church of Jesus Christ was a “mystery not known in other ages”—see Ephesians 3:1-7. This “mystery” had to do with both the character of what the Church is, and the time duration or Dispensation of its existence. The Church is composed of saved Jews and saved Gentiles, baptized into “one body,” to form “one new man”—see I Cor. 12:13 and Eph. 2:11-17.

Thus the Church, as an Age or time period or as a distinct company of people, was not known by the Hebrew prophets, nor was it immediately in view during the ministry of Christ on earth. It was distinctly revealed through the Apostle Paul as these Scriptures state—see also Col. 1:26, 27 and Rom. 16:25. The “mystery” character of the Church demands an exclusiveness from God’s revealed program for the nation of Israel as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Synoptic Gospels and the Book of Revelation.

When you look at particular prophecies in the Old Testament about the first and second coming of Christ you will not find the Church nor the Church Age. As examples—

<u>Isa. 61:1-4</u> (Lk. 4:16-20)	Two comings, but—no Church!
<u>Isa. 11:1-6</u>	Two comings, but—no Church!
<u>Zech. 9:9,10</u>	Two comings, but—no Church!
<u>Malachi 3:1-3</u>	Two comings, but—no Church!

REASON NO. V

The Mystery Character of the Rapture Itself

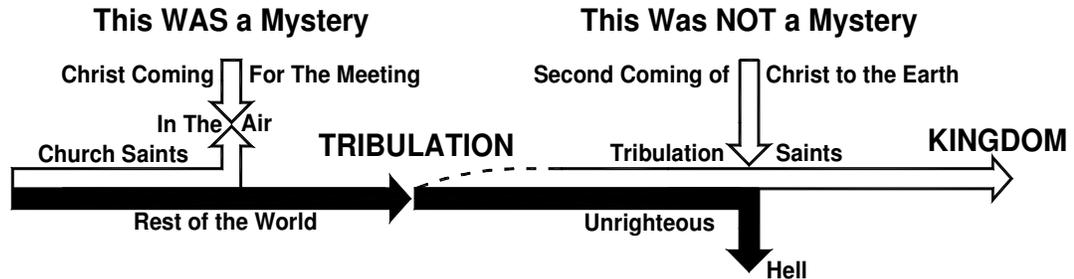
As the Church and the Church Age was a “Mystery” not revealed in the past, so also the very Rapture of the Church itself was a “Mystery” as well. Its unique characteristics cannot be equated with any other event.

In I Corinthians 15:51-54 the Apostle Paul says of the Rapture, “Behold I shew you a Mystery.” This means that the Rapture was a sacred secret not revealed in other ages.

In I Thessalonians 4:13-18 the Apostle Paul says of the Rapture, “This we say unto you by the Word of the Lord. “ Paul did not mean he was quoting the Old Testament or the Gospels. Like the prophets who had the Word of the Lord come to them, so it was with Paul and his companions. This was the Word of God coming to them about this new, unique revelation.

In Colossians Paul speaks of the totality of this revelation which culminates in our glorification. Col. 1:26,27, “Even the **mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations**, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you the hope of glory.**”

In Ephesians 5:26, 27 & 32 Paul speaks of the unique presentation of the Church to Christ as a part of this great mystery. Certainly the mysterious character of the Rapture of the Church gives the Church a distinctive place in its final disposition. Note the chart below—



REASON NO. VI

The Unique Promises of John 14 compared with I Thess. 4

When one reads the great prophecy chapter of Matthew 24, he will be impressed with the fact that the saints of that time will be finally rescued after passing through the calamitous times of the Great Tribulation with all its specified pestilences, wars, warnings of false prophets, signs, world events, actions of the Antichrist and finally, the earth literally being shaken from its foundations in cataclysmic judgment.

Not so, when one comes to John chapter 14. Here one finds himself in the calm seclusion of an evening meal, with Jesus warmly and beautifully explaining His return for His own. There are no signs, no earthshaking events, no Antichrist, no pestilences, earthquakes or fearful events—only the breathtaking suspense of our destination in heaven. What an amazing difference! Let us note its parallel with I Thess. 4—

John 14:1-4

I Thess. 4:13-18

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. "Let not your heart be troubled" | "that you sorrow not" |
| 2. "believe in Me" | "this we say unto you by
the Word of the Lord" |
| 3. "In My father's house" | "from Heaven..." |
| 4. "I will come again" | "the coming of the Lord" |
| 5. "I will receive you unto Myself" | "Caught up to meet the Lord in the air" |
| 6. "where I am there you may be also" | "So shall you ever be with the Lord" |
| 7. "let not your heart be troubled" | "Comfort one another with these words" |

The three distinct and important aspects of this passage are: 1) Christ is going into heaven to His Father's mansion; 2) in heaven Christ is going to be preparing residences for the believers; and 3) Christ will come again to receive the believers to Himself, and take them into heaven with Him to these prepared residences.

Obviously, the truths of this revelation cannot be forced to fit into the contrasting scenario, as described in Matthew 24, where Christ returns to reign on earth.

REASON NO. VII

The Unique Presentation of the Church Into Heaven

It is evident from the Scriptures which we have already read that the Church has a unique hope in the heavens. In Colossians 1:5 this truth is repeated, “For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.” There are three things that are going to happen when the Church is caught up into heaven at the Rapture.

- 1) The Bodily Perfection of the whole Church collectively. This is her resurrection and transformation into bodies like that of Christ (Rom. 8:23; I Cor. 15:45-53; Philip. 3:20,21 & I John 3:2).
- 2) The Bema Purging of the whole Church. “Bema” is simply the Greek word for Judgment Seat. The Church will stand before the judgment seat of Christ; see Rom. 14:10; I Cor. 3:13-15; II Cor. 5:10. This judgment will obviously require a period of time. It also will involve the final cleansing for the Church. This is all totally distinct from the judgment that will occur between the saved and lost on earth at the second coming of Messiah to reign over Israel and the world.
- 3) Then there is The Bridal Presentation of the Church to Christ in the heavenlies. This is revealed in II Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-27 & 32; and Colossians 1:21,22. This should not be confused with the great wedding event to take place on earth between redeemed Israel and the Messiah when He comes to reign.

These events could not take place at the very same time as those events prophesied to take place at the second coming of Christ to reign on the earth.

REASON NO. VIII

The Restrainer Removed Prior to the Day of the Lord

At the precise moment the Holy Spirit took up His residence upon the earth on the Day of Pentecost some 1900 years ago, the Church of Jesus Christ was instantly born. One moment there was just a group of believers praying; the next moment the Church was created by the sudden presence of the Holy Spirit. One moment the Church was not there; the next moment it was there! This is how this present Age began. Conversely, we can understand with the same Biblical certainty, that when the Holy Spirit removes Himself “from the midst” of this earth, the Church will be removed with Him. The Spirit and the Church are uniquely bound up together at this time. Romans 8:11 says, “**But if the Spirit of Him Who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead dwells in you, He Who raised up Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you.**”

When the collective Body of Christ, which was “baptized by the Spirit into one Body” (I Cor. 12:13), ascends suddenly into the air to meet Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit which uniquely composes that Body will be the very instrument of power by which all believers ascend into glory. Thus, the Holy Spirit will simultaneously ascend with them and in them. One moment the Church will be here—the next instant it will be G-O-N-E!

Now in II Thessalonians 2:1-10 we are precisely told of the removal of the Holy Spirit from the midst of the earth, and also just exactly when He will remove Himself. Thus, we have information to tell us when this Rapture will occur. In this chapter the Apostle Paul tells us there is One “restraining” the appearance of the Antichrist (vs. 6, 7) until He remove Himself. The identity of this Restraining One was no mystery to the Thessalonians. Paul says, “and now you know what is restraining...He Who is now restraining.” The identity of this Restrainer should also be no mystery to us. It is the Holy Spirit of God. How do we know that?

1) The Holy Spirit has always been a restraining force against evil. When the world came to be in rebellion against God in Noah’s day, God said, “My Spirit will not always strive with men...” (Gen. 6:3). When the Holy Spirit ceased restraining evil, judgment came. In the age of Israel’s nationhood, the Spirit often restrained the enemies, “...When the enemy came in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” (Isa. 59:19). And the Spirit acted as a restraint against Israel herself, “But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit...” (Isa. 63:10). Likewise, concerning the present Age Christ said, “And when He is come [the Holy Spirit], He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8).

2) The present ministration of the Holy Spirit is also called “the ministration of righteousness” (II Cor. 3:7-9, R.V., lit. trans.). It clearly stands in opposition to the administration of lawlessness under Antichrist. “The mystery of lawlessness is already at work” Paul says (II Thess. 2:7). Yet the Antichrist will eventually minister “lawlessness” as “the man of lawlessness” (II Thess. 2:3) without restraint. Obviously, the full unleashing of “lawlessness,” without restrictions, cannot go into effect until the impediment by “the ministration of righteousness” ceases. You can have degrees of lawlessness during the “reign of righteousness” (Rom. 5:21), and you can even have some righteousness during the “reign of lawlessness.” However, you cannot have “the reign of lawlessness” and “the reign of righteousness” at the same time because two conflicting ministrations cannot function simultaneously. Thus, as long as the “ministration of the Spirit” continues, the reign of Antichrist will be held back. When the Holy Spirit “removes [Himself] out of the midst,” then the Antichrist will reign and “be revealed.”

3) A parallel passage is I John 4:2-4. “Hereby know ye **the Spirit of God**...every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God: and this is **the spirit of Antichrist**, whereby you have heard that he should come; and even now already is in the world...because **greater is He** [the Holy Spirit] that is in you, **than he** [the spirit of Antichrist] that is in the world.”

This Scripture is similar to that of Paul in II Thess. 2. (A) Paul said, “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work;” John said, “the spirit of Antichrist. . . is already in the

world.” (B) Paul said, the lawless one will yet be “revealed in his own time;” John said, “ye have heard that he should come.” (C) Paul said, there is a greater One Who is now “restraining;” John said, “greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.” Language could hardly be any plainer as to Who the “Restrainer” is.

4) The One restraining in verse 6 of II Thess. 2 is spoken of in the neuter gender, “that which is restraining. “ Yet in verse 7, the same is spoken of in the masculine gender, “He Who now restrains ...He removes out of the way.” This gender switch is actually one of the evidences to the identity of the Holy Spirit. The word “spirit” in the Greek language is in the neuter gender and, therefore, on a few occasions the neuter gender is used (see also Rom. 8:16 & 26). However, the person of the Spirit is nearly always spoken of by the masculine gender pronoun—“He” (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-15, etc.).

5) Remember, the rebellion of Antichrist is no ordinary rebellion. Satan himself, personally on earth, is energizing the Antichrist. Legions of fallen angels assist. Demons are unleashed. Nations of earth are in support. This is the climactic rebellion of Lucifer. There simply is no human being, government or angel who can restrain this. Only Divinity can—and has been doing so for some 1900 years.

6) There is no other satisfactory explanation. Some have contended that the restraining One is Human Government, and yet, in this case, the Antichrist is the government; he will not restrain himself. Some have suggested Michael the archangel, yet Michael’s primary function is to protect Israel during the reign of Antichrist and not to prevent Antichrist from reigning.

We understand from Daniel and Revelation that the reign of Antichrist, as the head of a ten nation confederacy, BEGINS with the institution of a seven year covenant of peace between Israel and the nations around her. This means the Holy Spirit’s removal and the Rapture of the Church take place prior to that seven year covenant of peace. Antichrist then deceives the world through mighty signs and causes peace and craft to prosper. In the midst of that seven year period Antichrist breaks the covenant and the Great Tribulation begins.

REASON NO. IX

The Threefold Order of the Resurrection of the Righteous

In that great resurrection chapter of I Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul gives us crucial information about the “order[s]” of the resurrection of the righteous. Unlike the singular resurrection of the wicked, there are different companies to the resurrection of the righteous. This means that the resurrection of the saints will not happen all at once. There are different stages to it. This also means that the resurrection of the Old Testament saints takes place at a different time and “order” than that of the Church saints. This is perfectly consistent with all the facts presented as proof of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church of Jesus Christ. In verse 20 of this chapter Paul gives us the first signal concerning these “orders.” He says, “But now Christ has been raised up from the dead, the **‘firstfruit’** of those who have fallen asleep.”

This word “firstfruit” tells us that Paul is going back to the harvest Feasts of Israel, as given in the Hebrew Scriptures, to use them as a pattern for the resurrection of the righteous dead. When we look back at the Law of Moses we find that there were three Feasts centered around the harvest theme. On these three occasions all the men of Israel were required to appear before God in Jerusalem for the solemn observance of these three Feasts (Exo.23:14-17). Let us note each one. First, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover) there was the actual waving up in the air of a “sheaf” or handful of the early green ears of grain. This was said to be the “firstfruit” of grain which was dedicated to God and used as a token of the greater spring harvest to be celebrated 50 days later. Second, there was the Feast of Firstfruits (or of Weeks, since they counted seven weeks). In the Greek Scriptures this is called Pentecost (meaning 50th). On this occasion they were to grind up some of the harvested grain and make two loaves of bread. These two loaves are to be waved up in the air just like the handful which was waved 50 days earlier. Third and last, there was the final harvest Feast at the “end” of the year, which was the fall harvest festival of “Ingathering,” sometimes called “Tabernacles.”

Next, in verse 22 of this chapter Paul tells us that this resurrection of which he is speaking has to do with those who are “in Christ”—“**In Christ shall all be made alive.**” The unsaved are never said to be “in Christ.” In every case where Paul uses this expression, especially in this chapter, he means the saints—see verses 18, 19, 22, 31 & 58. As to the resurrection of those “in Christ,” Paul says in verse 23 the very important words—

“But each in his own order:”

W.E. Vine gives the standard meaning of the word “order.” “That which is arranged in order, was especially a military term, denoting a company; it is used metaphorically in I Cor. 15:23 of the various classes of those who have part in the first resurrection.” Then Paul gives the various “orders” or companies to the resurrection of the righteous.

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|---|--|
| 1) (First,) | “Christ the firstfruits, “ |
| 2) “afterward (epeita-next in sequence) | they that are Christs’ at His coming.” |
| 3) “then (eita-next in sequence) | the end ...when death is destroyed.” |

Thus, we have three “orders” to the resurrection of the righteous. This is obviously in keeping with the three Feasts of Israel as previously stated. It is important to remember that, in sequences such as this, the subject of the sequence must remain in the same nature or character. All three of these “Orders” have to do with the resurrection of the righteous.

✱ The first order is self-explanatory. Jesus Christ is the “firstfruit” of the righteous dead.

✱ The second order are those who “are Christ’s.” This means they belong to Christ. Christ is the “firstfruit” or sample of the spring harvest called “Firstfruits” or Pentecost. Christ is the token and guarantee of what is to come at harvest. In another great resurrection chapter of Romans 8, the Apostle Paul identifies believers today, that is the Church, as those who “have the firstfruits of the Spirit, waiting for the redemption of our bodies” (v. 23). That means that the second order in this sequence is the Church of Jesus

Christ. The Holy Spirit already confirmed this to us because the Church was born on the Feast Day of “Firstfruits” or Pentecost signifying the Church’s vital connection to what is symbolized in that Feast day. We can be sure that the meaning of this Feast day and its particular offering lay dormant in Israel’s history until the time of the particular revelations given to the Apostle Paul.

✱ This leaves the resurrection of all the Old Testament saints and the Tribulation saints who are killed. They are symbolized by the final harvest Feast of “Ingathering” or “Tabernacles.” This was done at the “end” (Exo.23:16) of the year and the resurrection of the Old Testament saints was said to be at “the end” of days, or at the “end” of the age (Dan. 12:1-3, 13; John 11:24). Likewise, the special law regarding “gleanings” at the end of the harvest (Lev. 23:22 & Deut. 24:19-22) most certainly covers the resurrection of the Tribulation saints. Please remember that all the passages that were given in “REASON No. I” apply to this third resurrection “order.” And, as I pointed out before, they leave out the Rapture of the Church. Interestingly enough, at this harvest Feast there is no special offering like the “wave sheaf” or “wave loaves” which symbolized the ascension of Christ and the Church. The resurrected in this case go right into the Millennial Kingdom on earth.

Thus we have the three orders of the resurrection of the righteous:

- 1) Christ Firstfruits—Wave Sheaf
- 2) Church Harvest of Firstfruits—Wave Loaves
- 3) O.T. & Trib. saints Harvest of Ingathering & Gleanings

Deuteronomy 16:1-17 recapitulates the Feasts with the added command of “rejoicing” for the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and the Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles. This beautifully represents the great happiness and rejoicing that will take place for us at the Rapture—“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy.” (I Thess. 2:19,20).

REASON NO. X

The Problem of Who Will Furnish the Kingdom If Both Events Happen Simultaneously

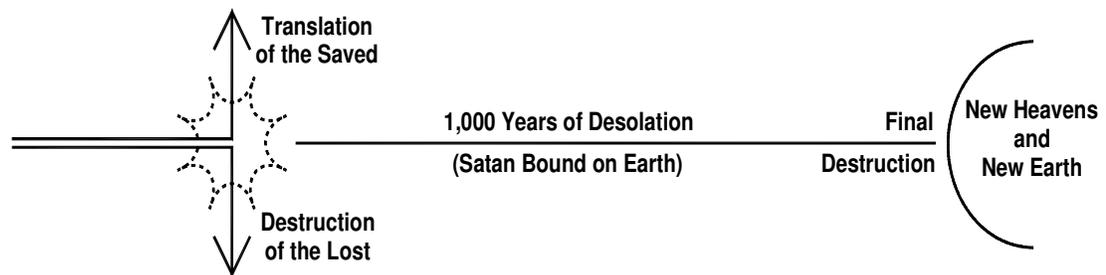
If the Rapture of the Church happens at the very same time Christ returns to destroy the wicked and rule on earth, then there are real problems. If the righteous are caught up and the wicked are damned, who will be left alive on earth to furnish or go into the Millennial Kingdom? This is no little problem with which every teacher, who believes that both events happen at the same time, has wrestled. The following are some of the efforts made to accommodate this problem.

First, there are “Post and A-Millennialists” who deny that there is a future literal Kingdom reign of Christ. They teach that “the Church is the Kingdom” and therefore, at the coming of Christ the saved are taken to heaven and the wicked are all damned at the

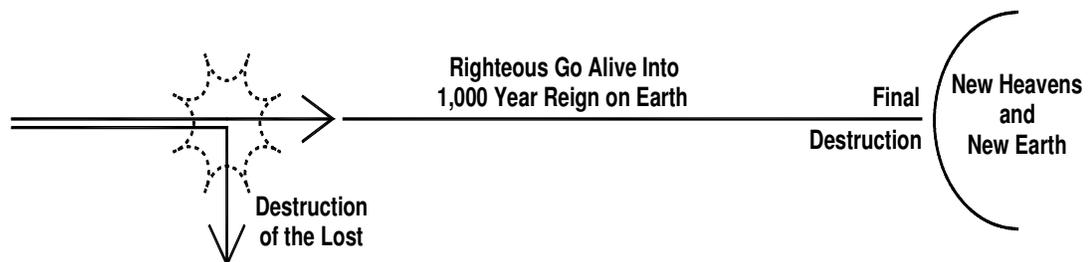
same time. The problem with this position is obvious. The Bible clearly reveals that the Church is not the prophesied Messianic Kingdom, and Christ will indeed reign on earth for 1000 years (Rev. 20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).



Second, there are those like the Seventh Day Adventists who realize that if all happens at the same time there would be no one left on earth. Yet they also realize that there is a 1000 year time period on earth clearly revealed. Thus, they teach that the earth will actually be empty and desolate (except for Satan) for one thousand years. They are at least consistent. The problem with this position is that they deny the clear revelation that Christ will reign on earth amongst the redeemed out of the Tribulation on a glorious earth, not a desolate earth.

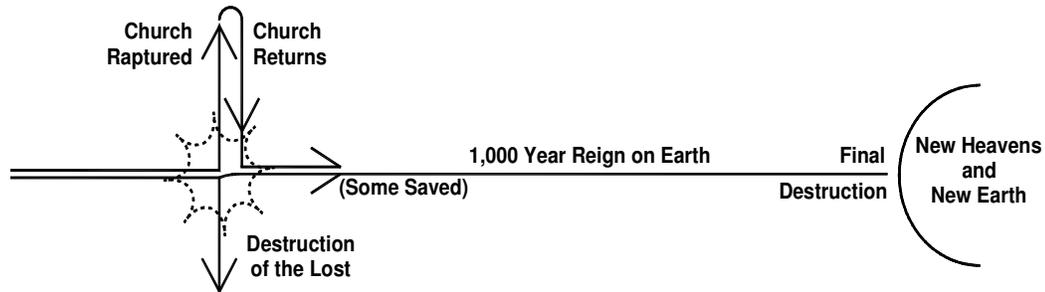


Third, there are those like the Watchtower Society and Herbert W. Armstrong who argue that there is really no such thing as the Rapture of the Church. They say it is just figurative language, which means that living saints all go alive into the Millennial Kingdom on earth. The problem with this position is that there is clear revelation that the Rapture is literal and just as real as the judgment of the lost and the Kingdom Age itself.



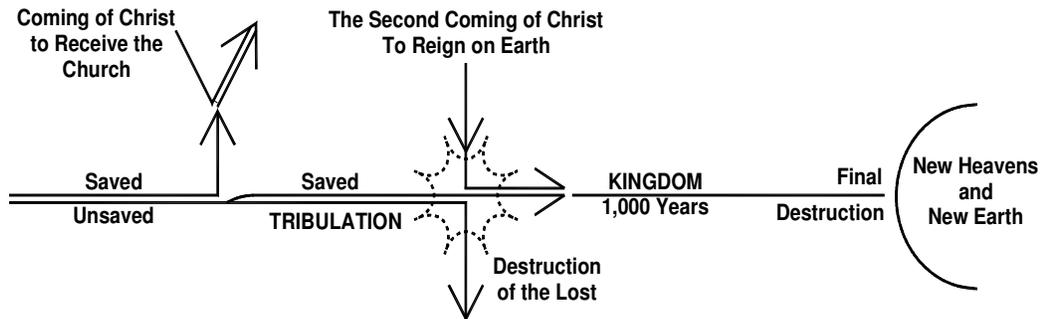
Fourth, there are "Post-Tribulationals" Fundamentalists who congest everything into a singular (or near singular) event. They say it must all happen at or about the same time. There are as many variations of this as there are proponents because it very obviously has

problems and contradictions, much like in a mad traffic jam! Trying to get the Church caught up to meet Christ at the second coming and yet returning with Him to reign, and at the very same time destroying the unbelievers yet somehow saving some of them, but not rapturing them with the rest, is no little task.



This fourth position ignores the clear revelation that the saints who endure through the reign of Antichrist and the Great Tribulation go alive into the Millennial Kingdom to re-people the earth. At the second coming of Christ, He will “gather all nations” and separate the sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:31-33). If the Rapture had already just taken place as depicted above, there would be no need for another separation. It would have already happened!

The truth and absolute necessity of the matter is that the Rapture of the Church and the second coming of Christ to judge and reign are two separate events with the reign of Antichrist in between.



THE FIVE CONFLICTS

REASON NO. XI

The Conflict of Economies

Though there was a clear transition in the early Church out of Judaism into pure Christianity, there is no such transition revealed for the close of this Age or in the Great Tribulation. Looking into the prophecies of the Tribulation period we find that the Law of

Moses and Temple worship is clearly practiced by the saints. If the Church exists until the coming of Christ to reign, then all the saved will be in the Church and they are clearly forbidden (by the revelations given to Paul) to practice the Law (Eph. 2:13-15; Col. 2:14-16; II Cor. 3:7-11; Heb. 8:13, etc). Today, both saved Jews and Gentiles spiritually lose their national identity and are jointly placed into “One Body,” also called “One New Man.” Such is not the case of believers in the Tribulation period. Therefore, there is created by this false teaching a great conflict of economies. Who or what should the saints obey? However, when the Church is raptured there is obviously an abrupt termination of “the Law of Christ” (I Cor. 9:21 & Rom. 8:2) for the Church. Therefore, those who are saved in the Tribulation period are consistently free to practice the Law system in anticipation of Christ’s New Covenant Kingdom reign.

REASON NO. XII

The Conflict of Buildings

Today, in this Age of Grace, God is actively building a Holy Temple (Eph. 2:19-22). This Temple is spiritual in nature. It is made of living stones. Its foundation is Christ. All saints should be actively engaged in this building program as instructed by Paul, “as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation [by distinctive revelations]...but let every man take heed how he builds there upon” (I Cor. 3:10). Both Jews and Gentiles who are saved today are jointly engaged in this building program. “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,” Philip. 3:3. The physical Temple was destroyed. The Head of the Church in heaven is not interested in issuing any other “building permits” during this Age of Grace. However, in the Tribulation period, the physical “Temple of God” in Jerusalem will once again be functioning and will be the center of the world’s attention. This surely indicates that the present building program has terminated and a totally different economy and building program has begun.

REASON NO. XIII

Conflict of Hopes

Everything about the blessed hope of the Church is heavenly in nature—John 14:1-3; I Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; Eph. 1:3, 18; 4:4, 30; 5:27; Philip. 1:6, 10; 2:16; 3:11-12; 3: 20-21; 4:5; Col. 1:5, 21-23, 27-28; 3:4; II Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13, etc. This hope is centered around Jesus Christ Who will take us into heavenly glory. It has nothing whatsoever to do with which political party is running for office, or what the nations of earth are doing for the pitiful plight of world conditions. All these things are of serious concern, but none of them have anything whatsoever to do with the Hope of the Church—the true Church, the “body of Christ.”

In contrast to this, the Hope of Israel does center around government and world conditions. Their hope is in the Messiah Who will bring in a perfect rule on earth. “The desert will blossom as a rose,” “the nations will beat their swords into plowshares,” and “the knowledge of the Lord will be from sea to sea.”

Now, if we have both these Hopes represented by two different groups of preachers evangelizing the world at the same time, with both groups claiming to represent God's message for the last generation and telling the world what to hope for, we are really going to have confusion! Nobody will know which to believe in or hope for! Those evangelizing for Israel will say, "Forget about heaven; our hope is in the Messiah coming to restore this earth!" Those evangelizing for the Body of Christ will say, "Forget about this earth and all its problems; our hope is in heaven from whence we look for our Savior!"

REASON NO. XIV

Conflict of "Grace" versus "Wrath"

God is appealing to the world today on the basis of His "Grace." John 1:17; Rom. 5:2; 6:14; Gal. 5:4, etc. Today God's Grace is said to be "reigning" (Rom.5:21). God is drawing the attention of the world to the redemption provided for mankind in the substitutionary death, burial and resurrection of Christ. God is likewise appealing to the Church to live under the principles manifested through the Grace of God in Christ. God is saying to earth, "Look at what blessed graces I have provided for you in Christ"—eternal redemption, everlasting life, victory over sin in living. This is why this Age is called "the Dispensation of the Grace of God" (Eph. 3:2). What characterizes this Age is the manifestation of the Gospel of the Grace of God.

In vivid contrast to this is the fact that when one opens the pages of Divine revelation concerning the Great Tribulation time period, he looks WRATH square in the face. The vicious eyes and snarling teeth of Wrath are on every page shredding the world to pieces. There is absolutely nothing in all of human history as foreboding as the coming time when the earth will wallow in its pain and suffering. The book of Revelation is frightening. God is speaking to the world in His Wrath in the pages of the book of Revelation. That is the primary and fundamental message during the reign of rebellion under Antichrist.

Pre-Tribulationists do not say that God's salvation grace is not available in the Great Tribulation, for it is. Nor do they say that there are not episodes of disaster in this Age of Grace, for there are. But what I am saying is that these two time periods are in characteristic contrast; they do not go together, nor can they overlap.

REASON NO. XV

The Conflict of Reigns.

As we have already stated under "REASON No. VIII, 2)," the free reign of Antichrist, both politically and ideologically in wickedness, cannot coexist with the reign of the Holy Spirit in righteousness. The reign of the "Holy" Spirit on earth, embodied in the New Creation, could not be simultaneous with the reign of the "Un-holy" spirit (Lucifer), embodied in the "Man of Sin."

In II Cor. 3:7-9, the word used in Greek for “ministration” is *diakonia*, which is the noun form of the verb *diakoneo*. The verb form signifies a minister serving, whereas the noun form signifies the particular office or ministration of the servant or the organization. In the Revised Version it is properly and literally translated “ministration” (sometimes in the Authorized Version—“administration”). In II Corinthians 3:7-9 the present “ministration of the Spirit” is held up in contrast to the “ministration” of the Law of Moses. In the same passage the inspired Apostle Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit’s rule is a “ministration of righteousness.” Thus, the Holy Spirit’s presence on earth stands in direct restraint to the spirit of “lawlessness.”

When the Holy Spirit came to reside on earth, there was a veritable explosion of spiritual testimony before the world. It seems as if Christianity conquered the Roman empire within a few hundred years. Only when the reign of the Holy Spirit ceases can the “Man of Lawlessness” be revealed and function in a “revived Roman empire” under his control. It even appears in the Scriptures that the Antichrist will be the world’s overwhelming choice of a “savior.” Such worldwide deception could only take place because of the withdrawal of that powerful ministration by the Holy Spirit of God.

THE FIVE CONFIRMATIONS in the Great Tribulation

REASON NO. XVI

The Great Tribulation Is Jewish in Nature—Not Church-Oriented

The Great Tribulation is a time period wherein God will again be dealing with Israel and the Jewish people.

- 1.) “70 weeks [of Years] determined upon [Israel] and the Holy City”—Dan. 9:24.
- 2.) Center of world attention will be “The Holy Place” where Antichrist will dwell—II Thess. 2:4.
- 3.) Antichrist will enter “the Temple” claiming to be god—II Thess. 2:4 & Dan. 11:31 & 12:11.
- 4.) Special instructions for those in Judea—Matt.24:16.
- 5.) The observance of the Jewish Sabbath day—Matt.24:20.
- 6.) “Sacrifice and Oblations” again practiced—Dan. 9:27; 8:11-14.
- 7.) The 12 Tribes of Israel will again have clear representation—Rev. 7 & 14.
- 8.) The Two Witnesses will exercise the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah—Rev. 11:3-12 & Luke 9:30.
- 9.) Both the outer court of the Temple and the City of Jerusalem will be occupied by enemies—Rev. 11:1, 2.
- 10.) The Tribulation will be upon Daniel’s people—Dan. 9:24; 12:1, etc.
- 11.) The “Gospel of the Kingdom” will again be preached—Matt.24:14.
- 12.) Elijah will come to turn the hearts of fathers and sons—Matt. 17:11 & Mal.4:5,6.

REASON NO. XVII

The Great Tribulation “Saints” Are not Church Saints

Much is said in the books of Daniel, Matthew and Revelation about the “saints” of God who will live and do battle with the Antichrist. These saints dwell on earth and are under the final world system, but they will put their trust in God and not submit to Antichrist’s number or blasphemy. Even though at first the Antichrist and his forces will prevail against them, yet they do not surrender their allegiance to God. Eventually they will overcome Antichrist “by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.” In Daniel chapter 7, verse 21, the Antichrist “wars against the saints” and prevails. Again it says, “he wears out the saints” (v. 25), yet the saints shall take the Kingdom and possess it (vs. 18 & 22). It will be God’s favor to give the saints the Kingdom (v. 27). In Revelation (6:9-11) many saints will be martyred because of the Word of God and their testimony. In Rev. 12:11 the saints “overcome by the blood of the lamb and their testimony.” In Rev. 15:2-4, the saints are the final victors.

As we have already stated earlier in “REASON No. III,” in Matthew 3, 13, 24 & 25 the saints are gathered into the Kingdom after serving God during the “seven” year time of their calling and severe trials. Obviously, since none of these saints are ever said to be Church saints, and are never said to be collectively raptured into heaven, it is confirmation that the Church is not present.

REASON NO. XVIII

The Great Tribulation Is the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble,” not the Church’s Trouble

One of the purposes of the Great Tribulation is illustrated for us in the story of Joseph and his brethren. Many years after Joseph had been rejected by his brethren and sold to the Gentiles, he becomes a great ruler in Egypt. When an unprecedented seven year period of horrible famine comes upon the world, his brethren come to Egypt for help and relief. They do not recognize their brother, Joseph, but he recognizes them. Joseph treats his brethren very harshly, even though he also helps them. The severity of Joseph’s dealing with his brethren brings them to a place where they reflect back in their guilty consciences to the evil deed they had done to Joseph. They finally arrive at an attitude of heart where Joseph can openly receive and bless them. The story is very emotional, but it beautifully illustrates how God will deal with His people during the Great Tribulation that comes upon the world in the last days. God will use it to bring Israel to Himself.

In Jeremiah 30:4-9 the inspired prophet says of that final time, “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the TIME OF JACOB’S TROUBLE; but he shall be saved out of it.”

In Ezekiel 20:33-38, the prophet speaks of that time in these words, “And I will bring you out from the people ...where you are scattered ...with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and THERE WILL I PLEAD MY CASE

WITH YOU FACE TO FACE ...and I will cause you to pass under the rod ...and I will purge out from among you the rebels.”

In Matthew 24:15-22 & Luke 21:23 Christ speaks of the Great Tribulation and nation of Israel and says, “there will be great wrath upon this people.”

In Zechariah 13:8 & 9, the prophet speaks of that time, “And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third part shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: and they shall call on My Name, and I will hear them: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.”

REASON NO. XIX

In the Great Tribulation the “Woman” of God’s Favor is Israel, Not the Church

May I say it reverently, “God is not a polygamist!” The Scriptures bear out that God has on earth only ONE “Woman” at a time! It is well-known by all Bible students that in the Hebrew Scriptures God speaks by metaphor or analogy that the nation of Israel is “the Wife of Jehovah.” When Israel departed from God in idolatry the prophets likened it to “Israel’s playing the harlot,” and God said He would “divorce His Wife” (Hosea 2:2; Isa. 50:1). Yet, God also promised that in the latter days He would bring her to Himself once again. (As examples of this see—Ezek. 16:8-63; Hosea 2:2, 16 & 19).

In the interim during Israel’s present departure, Christ by a similar metaphor has likened the Church which is His Body to His Bride, who will be presented to Him in Heaven as a chaste virgin (Eph. 5:21-33; II Cor. 11:2 & 3). This Woman is not found in the Hebrew Scriptures or the book of Revelation.

Who then is the “Woman of God’s favor in the book of Revelation chapter 12 during the Great Tribulation? It is not at all difficult to identify her. In verse 1 she has “a crown of twelve stars”—Twelve Tribe Israel. In verse 5 “she brought forth a Man Child Who was to rule all nations”—Israel, who gave to us the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Great Tribulation, Satan will “persecute the Woman who brought forth the Man Child” (again, Israel). Finally, God will supernaturally protect the Woman (verses 14-17), even though Satan “makes war against the remnant of her [Israel’s] seed.” The final “Marriage Supper of the Lamb” takes place at the end of the Great Tribulation—see Psalm 45:1-17; Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13 & Rev. 19:7-10 (primarily Israel).

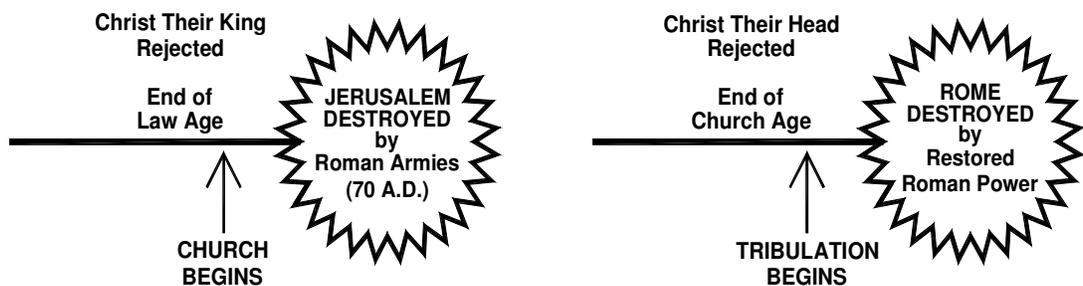
REASON NO. XX

The Great Tribulation Spells the Doom of Apostate Christendom *And it is Appropriate that the “Body of Christ” not be Present*

The antithesis to the “Mystery Body of Christ,” as seen in Paul’s letters, is shockingly displayed in the book of Revelation as “Mystery Babylon, that old whore, the

mother of harlots and abominations of earth” (Rev. 17 & 18). Yes, the final form of Apostate Christendom is “Mystery Babylon the Great.” Most evangelical Christians recognize this fact. However, perhaps the strongest argument that this is Roman Catholicism (and her Protestant Daughters) is from the footnotes in the Roman Catholic Bible itself. There they admit that the city is Rome. They further admit that pagan religion is in view. However, they dodge the implication by saying that this is the past pagan religion of Rome (see the footnotes in The Douay Version, or The New American Bible, etc.). The only problem with this explanation is that the account in Revelation is a prophecy of the future Great Tribulation just prior to the second coming of Christ. So it is future Pagan Rome—not the past Pagan Rome—that is in view! And the future Pagan Rome, richly decorated and jeweled, is sitting over there on the Tiber River right NOW awaiting the fulfillment of this prophecy.

When Jesus Christ was rejected and crucified by His own people, the Law Dispensation was terminated, a new Age began, and shortly thereafter the horrible destruction of Jerusalem took place by the powerful Roman armies. And so it will be, that as apostate Christendom has totally rejected Christ as the living Head and has occasioned the Holocaust of the physical brethren of Christ (the Jews), the Age of Grace will be terminated, the Tribulation will begin, and shortly thereafter the horrible destruction of “Mystery Babylon” will take place by the same Roman power—the restored Roman Empire of the last days. Notice the chart below.



In conclusion, it can be added:

1) No one actually believes that the “Church which is Christ’s Body” will go through the Great Tribulation. This may *sound* as a very surprising statement to make! Why do I make it?? Because it is a fact that as the corporate collective “body of Christ,” beginning from Pentecost until the Rapture, “the Church” could not possibly go through the Great Tribulation. At best only the last generation of believers in this Church Age could. Therefore, the collective “body of Christ” will not go through the time period of “the Great Tribulation.”

2) Furthermore the Great Tribulation Scriptural passages never mention “the Church which is Christ’s body” in any book and, furthermore, there is no revealed purpose for it there!

THE END